

Tom Horne  
Superintendent

# N.E.W.S

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## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **HORNE TO RECOMMEND THAT USE OF CALCULATORS BY SPECIAL ED STUDENTS CHANGED TO A STANDARD ACCOMMODATION**

PHOENIX (Friday, June 22, 2007) – At the State Board of Education meeting this Monday, State Superintendent Tom Horne will recommend that the use of calculators by special education students be changed from a non-standard to a standard accommodation. The recommendation will be that Board action be contingent upon approval being received from the federal government. The change is based on a scientific study performed by University of Arizona professor, Jerome V. D’Agostino, Ph.D., at the request of the Department of Education.

The use of calculators by special education students was originally considered a non-standard accommodation. An accommodation is considered non-standard if it has the effect of enhancing a student’s score on the test.

Until last year, the use of non-standard accommodations meant that a student could not be counted as proficient for federal No Child Left Behind purposes. However, last year, the federal government ruled that the student not only could not be counted as proficient, but that the student could not be counted as taking the test. Since 95 percent of every category of students must take the test for a school to make adequate yearly progress, this meant that a school with even a few students requiring this accommodation could be prevented from making adequate yearly progress.

This year, the Department of Education commissioned a study by Jerome D’Agostino to use as evidence to reclassify the use of calculators as a standard accommodation by special education students. This study was recently completed and concluded: “A decision to allow alternate mathematics accommodations as standard accommodations in Arizona will be congruent with results of this study.”

Reclassifying this accommodation as a standard accommodation will enable a number of schools to make adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind system, that were not able to do so last year. Consequently, Superintendent Horne will recommend to the State Board this Monday that it approve the change, contingent upon the federal government also approving the

change. It is hoped, that with the D'Agostino study as a scientific basis, the federal government can be persuaded to approve the change.

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